

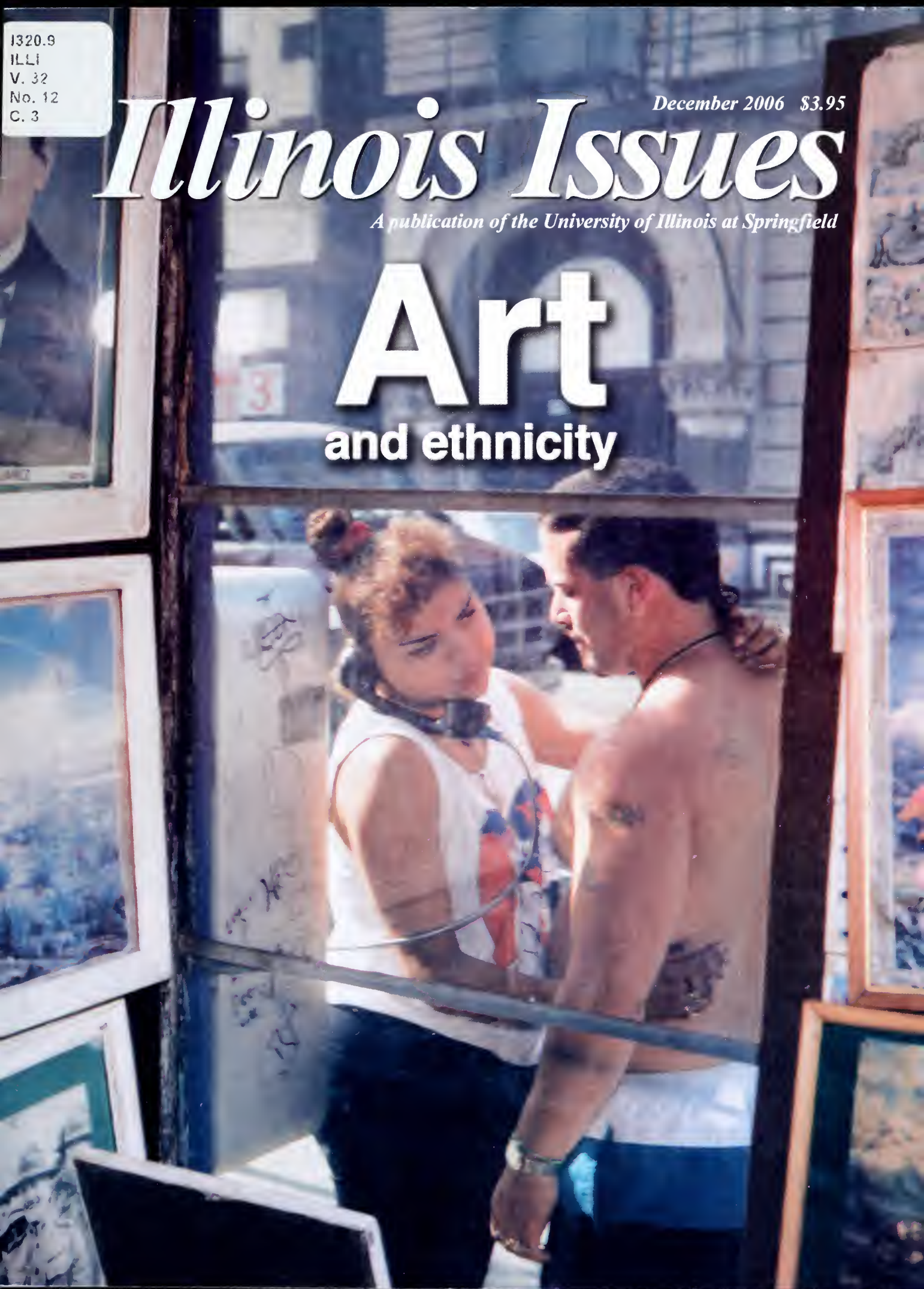
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Illinois Issues

A publication of the University of Illinois at Springfield

Art and ethnicity



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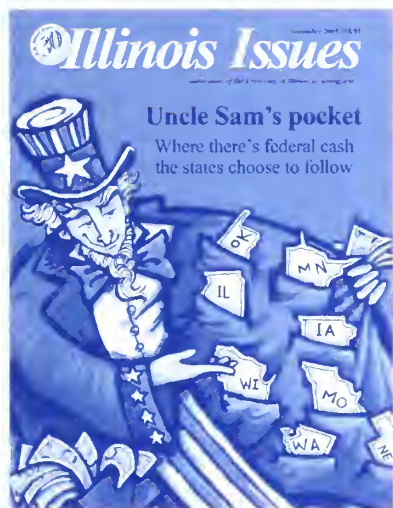
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Peggy Bayer Long



**An Illinois writer defines
the border between art and truth**

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erratically to the northwest, roughly from the west of Sonoyta Arroyo on the Mexican side toward Yuma, Ariz. Their guides, the coyotes, took their money and left them to die. That any survived 110-degree days with no

survivors, the dead and the coyotes — and on the trackers, the border patrol, the migra, the bureaucrats on both sides of the border.

Urrea, who teaches creative writing at the University of Illinois at Chicago

meat to be cooked. KFC is waiting for its Mexican-plucked, Mexican-slaughtered chickens to be fried by Mexicans. And the western desert is waiting, too — its temperatures soaring, a fryer in its own right.”

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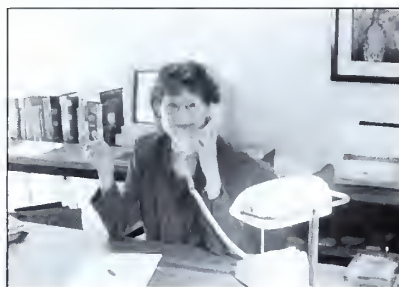
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those major items will fly through the house, which is unlikely to gain enough seats to secure a three-fifths majority.

• Update: Key state legislative races that we covered in [September](#) proved to be tight. In the northwest suburbs of Chicago, Democrat Fred Crespo has a lead over incumbent Terry Parke, a Hoffman Estates Republican who has served the area for more than two decades. Not all precincts had reported the last I checked. Downstate around Clinton, Marion and Jefferson counties, Democratic incumbent Kurt Granberg of Carlyle could edge out his repeat Republican opponent, John Cavaletto of Salem. But the race has yet to be called, with the latest results showing Granberg with 50 percent to Cavaletto's 49 percent. That's a difference of about 100 votes.

Find it at <http://illinoisissues.uis.edu>

Peggy Boyer Long



An Illinois writer defines the border between art and truth

by Peggy Boyer Long

Julian Ambros Malaga wore his red-striped soccer jersey for good luck.

Mario Castillo had crossed before. He once spent eight months living and working in Galena, Ill.

Enrique Landeros García wanted to make a better life for his wife Octavia and their son Alexis.

In the end, Reymundo Barreda Maruri had to hold up his boy Reymundo Jr.

Those were some of the men who walked into the desert that May in 2001. Twenty-six went in, by some counts. Twelve stumbled back out.

They had no way of knowing it, but the walkers took the Devil's Highway, a region novelist and poet Luis Alberto Urrea calls the deadliest on the continent, where it gets so hot that "bodies will mummify almost immediately."

Their route, traced after the fact by the official trackers, moved erratically to the northwest, roughly from the west of Sonoyta Arroyo on the Mexican side toward Yuma, Ariz. Their guides, the coyotes, took their money and left them to die. That any survived 110-degrees with no

"KFC is waiting for its Mexican-plucked, Mexican-slaughtered chickens to be fried by Mexicans. And the western desert is waiting, too — its temperatures soaring, a fryer in its own right."

Luis Alberto Urrea
The Devil's Highway

water and no shelter is a testament to the human will. That they were in the desert at all shows a failure of political will.

The Devil's Highway, Urrea's nonfiction account of this true story, was a finalist for the 2005 Pulitzer Prize. He put flesh and bones on the survivors, the dead and the coyotes — and on the trackers, the border patrol, the migra, the bureaucrats on both sides of the border.

Urrea, who teaches creative writing at the University of Illinois at Chicago

and has been inducted into the Latino Literary Hall of Fame, is qualified to tell this story. He was born in Tijuana but grew up in San Diego. His father was Mexican, his mother Anglo. And they grew to regard each other as "one of them," he writes in his autobiographical *nobody's son: notes from an american life*.

The Devil's Highway is a useful book to read now as Congress and the president take up immigration policy once again.

The official "death packets," Urrea writes, "are known as 'archives,' and harvest season — May through July — is known as 'death season.' It is then that lettuce, tomatoes, cucumbers, oranges, strawberries are all ready to be picked. Arkansas chickens are ready to be plucked. Cows are waiting in Iowa and Nebraska to be ground into hamburger, and grills are ready in McDonald's and Burger King and Wendy's and Taco Bell for the ground meat to be cooked. KFC is waiting for its Mexican-plucked, Mexican-slaughtered chickens to be fried by Mexicans. And the western desert is waiting, too — its temperatures soaring, a fryer in its own right."

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And, of course, beyond the desert lies Illinois, where Mexican migrants join immigrants from more than 100 countries. Illinois, Chicago especially, has always been a destination for pilgrims seeking a better life. In fact, immigrants and their children account for more than a quarter of the state's population now. And last year, the number of foreign-born Illinoisans rose, reaching a double-digit percentage increase from 2000.

That reality helped inspire Managing Editor Maureen Foertsch McKinney to focus this year's arts issue, the magazine's 11th, on the theme of ethnicity. Illinois' multicultural history, she writes, has enriched the artistic heritage.

We owe thanks to her and to the rest of the editorial and design

team — Beverley Scobell, Bethany Carson, Vera Leopold and Diana Nelson — for making this and other editions a success throughout the year.

And a special year-end thanks is due Charlene Lambert and Toni Langdon, our circulation, marketing and finance team, without whom nothing could happen.

We hope you'll take the time to savor the diverse cultural contributions of Illinoisans. As Urrea says, "I know how much color and beauty we add to the American mix."

I would add that sometimes, like Urrea, artists also show us a vision of the darker side of ourselves. □

Peggy Boyer Long can be reached at peggyboy@aol.com.

The Hummingbird's Daughter

A novel by Luis Alberto Urrea

Magic realism, writes Luis Alberto Urrea in his 1998 autobiography *nobody's son*, is "basically reality," though he adds that most of us probably won't believe it. "Gingos have a strangely difficult time with the bizarre details of the daily life of Latinos. People scoff at personal testimonials of wonders, but they love to read them in novels from Colombia."

Now his 2005 *The Hummingbird's Daughter*, a novel about his "aunt" Teresita Urrea, a Mexican revolutionary and people's saint, has been compared to Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. But this book is grounded in Urrea history. His family's memories, he writes, are "full of ghosts," including one that may or may not have watched over his own baby crib.

As for Teresita, who lived from 1873 to 1906, she also is Mexican history. Legend has it that La Santa de Cabora came back from the dead, performed healing among the poor who flocked to her father's ranch, preached to the pilgrims and penned newspaper articles denouncing the government, the church and the landowners. This did not make the officials or the priests happy, or her father, the rich and powerful Don Tomás Urrea, who could only sputter when she sat up at her wake.

"She said, 'I am tired. I have come a long way. Have you been there yet?'"

Tomás coughed. How was one to be a father to a dead girl? Did one scold her? Correct her?"

Who is to say whether Teresita, still honored in parts of Mexico, did or didn't do these things. But her story, researched and reimagined by Urrea over the course of 20 years, has much to say about poverty and oppression, rebellion and healing — whether we doubt the details of the miracles or not.

Urrea, who also writes poetry and nonfiction, heard about the Saint of Cabora at family gatherings in Tijuana.

The historical record on Teresita is extensive, but in an interview included in the 2006 paperback edition, Urrea says he wrote a novel because "I quickly realized that you can't footnote a dream." It was, he says, through the "intuitive" that he came to know Teresita. "Finally, I felt that a novel was a way to arrive at the deepest truth about the events of her life."

Peggy Boyer Long

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Bethany Carson



A century of the Capitol's history is revealed as paint is scraped away

by Bethany Carson

I take the scenic route to work every morning. I walk up three flights of the Illinois Capitol's grand staircase that lead to a towering piece of art above the Press Room door.

It's a 20-foot-by-40-foot painting of a 1778 peace treaty with George Rogers Clark and Native Americans at Fort Kaskaskia, and it almost looks small compared to the impressive depth and ornate detail of the stained glass dome soaring above the Capitol rotunda.

It's hard to imagine how such an elaborate architectural plan could have been built in 1868. But that's when Illinois broke ground in Springfield for its sixth state Capitol. It took 20 years and \$4.3 million to build, and original architects John Cochrane of Chicago and Alfred Piquenard of France designed

It's hard to imagine how such an elaborate architectural plan could have been built in 1868.

But that's when Illinois broke ground in Springfield for its sixth state Capitol.

a lavish art museum as much as a functional Statehouse.

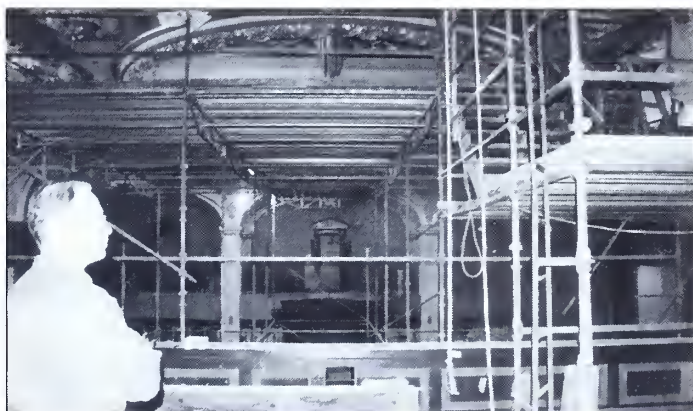
But over the years, style, function and budgets change. Unfortunately, historic preservation hasn't always been a priority, says Illinois' current Capitol architect, Donald McLarty. A 23-year veteran of historic building restoration, he came from Virginia to head the recently created Office of the Architect.

Original, detailed murals disappeared beneath more than a dozen layers of paint or white drop-down ceilings, he says. "There was a feeling that we've got to make this building look more modern and useful, and that's why so much of this got covered up." Besides, it was less expensive to maintain a uniformly painted wall than it was to maintain decorative murals.

"Finally," McLarty says, "people woke up and realized these are really treasures that we have, and we need to preserve them."

Since May, hundreds of workers have been renovating the Illinois House and Senate chambers and the first-floor rotunda. True artisans have been hired to bring black-and-white photographs to life in vibrant colors through research and interpretation of history.

Photographs by Bethany Carson



Tim Mapes, Illinois House Democrats' chief of staff, oversees work in the chamber. Scaffolding was constructed to recreate an ornate ceiling light.



The lay light, a glass panel lit from above, is braced by a new molding. The gold leafing accents the garland and will reflect the artificial light.

Their challenge is to integrate modern building codes, fire safety standards, conveniences and technologies — Internet, air-conditioning — without destroying the historic fabric of the building, McLarty says, and to do it within the time and space available, which is not much.

The Senate work is on schedule to be finished before January, says Linda Hawker, secretary of that chamber. Though the House is not expected to be completed by the time the 95th General Assembly convenes next month, says Tim Mapes, chief of staff for House Speaker Michael Madigan, it will be done by February.

Hawker, Mapes and their new voice of experience, McLarty, have overseen problem-solving on upgrades of lighting, security, sound and legislative voting systems while restoring historic treasures discovered in the process.

In the Senate chamber, workers stripped the wall behind the press box and found an original pattern resembling the federal shield, with 13 stars and 13 stripes symbolizing the colonies. The original pattern is being restored, as are such details as the hand-sewn carpets in each chamber and roll-down desks in the Senate. They conveniently hide microphones, laptop computers and legislative voting systems wired throughout the chambers.

"You have to make changes that are reasonable and can fit the function," Mapes says. "You can't do everything. Would have been nice, but I'm not sure

we ever would have gotten it done."

It all started as a necessary upgrade of a heating and air-conditioning system that had exceeded its 30-year life span by five years. But the project grew in scope as Mapes and top state lawmakers dared to ask, "While we're at it, could we...?"

That's an expensive question, says Hawker. But the devil's advocate asks, if not now, when would it be appropriate to spend millions of dollars to unmask the history of the Statehouse?

That's where such contractors as Edward Magee come in. He's a supervisor for the New York-based EverGreene Painting Studios Inc. and has worked on the Illinois Capitol for months. The company analyzes chips of paint, uses a scientific process to determine the original dimensions of color and deduces history. Magee has photocopied black-and-white pictures of the original rooms and, voilà, he interprets what the spaces would have looked like in the late 1800s. "It's not about the money being spent," Magee says. "It's about doing the right job."

So far, asbestos removal has cost \$7.5 million, according to Steve Brown, spokesman for the House speaker. Upgrading the heating and air-conditioning system could cost another \$22 million, and rehabilitating the House and Senate chambers could near \$10 million.

The transformation is monumental. It's still visible in a first-floor committee room. Above the representatives' seats remains a white drop-down ceiling that

was installed in the 1970s. It's completely different from the other side of the room, where the public, lobbyists and reporters sit under a mural that looks like a Victorian skylight. Painters recreated gold flowers that wrap around white latticework surrounding what looks like natural blue sky.

In the House chamber, a former skylight had been filled in. A fire in the 1930s damaged the ceiling, which was replaced by an ornamental plaster one.

No longer. What used to be a skylight is now a 7,500-piece lay light, a glass panel with artificial lighting above. The cathedral and hand-spun, 36-color antique glass has become the centerpiece of the chamber.

Steve Brooks, owner of Brooks Art Glass Inc. in Springfield, fabricated the lay light designed by two Illinois firms.

Philip Hamp of Chicago's Vinci-Hamp Architects Inc. worked with Northbrook's Wiss, Janney Elstner Associates to design the lay light and art glass, which is based on the original space's mid-19th-century French style.

Hamp's firm also designed the entire House and Senate renovation.

"Our hope is that the chambers will have a 19th-century-effective look to them, based on EverGreene's painting and Brooks' art glass and all the artisan work that will give them a credibility and a dignity that they haven't had for a long time," Hamp says.

"And I think we'll succeed in that." □

Bethany Carson can be reached at capitolbureau@aol.com.



Glenn Brown of EverGreene Painting Studios paints the spokes of the lay light. He helped paint the molding, which was just white plaster when he started the job. Brooks Art Glass Inc. in Springfield made the lay light with 36 colors, 7,500 pieces and cathedral and hand-spun antique glass.

Photographs by Bethany Carson

BRIEFLY

DUST MEMORIES

Distance gives veteran his artistic perspective

Aaron Hughes spent 15 months driving the same desert roads, seeing the same devastating scenes and feeling the same sense of helplessness as he passed children begging for bread.

Now 24, Hughes carries ambivalent memories of his time as a soldier in Kuwait and Iraq. His tour of duty and repeated extensions with the Illinois Army National Guard supported Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003 and '04.

It has taken nearly two years to come to terms with the monotony and anxiety that became commonplace during his missions, which ranged from 24 hours to three weeks, with the 1244th Transportation Company, based in North Riverside.

When he returned to Illinois, he expected everything to be different, but he says he realized nothing was, except for him.

In an attempt to understand his changed relationships and emotions, he revisited photographs he had taken during deployment. That mental process turned into a physical one as he translated his memories into a personal war narrative, a collection of art called *Dust Memories*.

The experience in the Middle East changed his focus. An industrial design major before his deployment, he expects to graduate from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign as a painting major this month.

Dust Memories is a collection of drawings, paintings and collages using photo transfers, ink on paper, charcoal and watercolor. His solo exhibit includes *Iraqi Triptych*, a paneled oil painting that stretches 8 feet tall. The images show shoeless children lining a desolate road with their hands extended.

"There's this huge need," Hughes says, "and you're standing there looking them in the face for a year and a half. You don't change it. You can't help it. You can't



Iraqi veteran and U of I student Aaron Hughes translated his experiences into works of art.

affect it. That made me feel very heartless."

But intertwined in the series is an image of a small flower, an arabesque pattern that Hughes says is a cultural indicator and a metaphor for the cycle of life. But to him, it also represents his effort to avoid cynicism. "Finding these small moments that allow me to consider not only the questions of humanity and the realization of death, but also a space to have that beauty in your life for an instant. Something that's not completely about destruction, death and dust."

Hughes, who presented more of his artwork at Chicago's National Vietnam Veterans Art Museum this past Veterans Day, donates all proceeds of his artwork to such charities as Amnesty International and the Global Medical Relief Fund, a New York-based nonprofit that provides prosthetics to children in war-torn countries.

Beyond being therapeutic for him and

raising funds for others, he says he hopes the artwork spurs dialogue. "I wasn't trying to tell people what they should think about it, but I was trying to say, 'Hey, think about it.'"

Viewers, particularly his Army friends, saw his work not just as art but as a documentary of their experiences, says Christine Catanzarite, associate director of the Illinois Program for Research in the Humanities. Hughes' personal account reminds viewers that war is not remote or something that happens thousands of miles away, but a shared experience among soldiers.

It also provides a context untold by statistics and media interpretations. Hughes says, particularly the victimization of children. "It's one of the things that affected me as much as the human cost of this whole occupation, and that doesn't just come in the form of U.S. casualties."

Bethany Carson

For updated news see the *Illinois Issues* Web site at <http://illinoisissues.uis.edu>

Jazz professionals and students jam

Chicago Public Schools jazz students are learning what it feels like to stand at the tip of a cliff, take a deep breath and jump without a safety net. That's what it feels like when they improvise a jazz solo on stage for the first time.

The students play in front of musicians and parents as part of the Jazz Links Jam Sessions coordinated by the Jazz Institute of Chicago and the HotHouse Center for Performance and Exhibitions.

Students as young as those in elementary school play with professionals in the Jazz Links house band, led by pianist Ken Chaney, Lorin Cohen on bass, Robert Irving III on piano, Kobie Watkins on drums and Corey Wilkes on trumpet.

Lauren Deutsch, executive director of the Jazz Institute, says the program has grown from a dozen students each month to about 50 from Chicago and the surrounding suburbs.

The jam sessions are one by-product of the Jazz Links education program, which started in 2002 when the institute and local band

directors formed an advisory board. The goal was to provide a venue for students to play outside of school because formal jazz clubs don't allow minors, Deutsch says. In the process, young students gain access to the oral tradition of jazz.

Jam sessions of old were a chance for novice musicians to prove they were ready to play with seasoned professionals, she says. "Jam sessions require the ability to improvise. You always start out with a tune, but in the context of that tune, you are

supposed to solo out of your own head and own heart with no music in front of you. It really puts your thinking and your creativity to the test."

The spotlight initially makes the students so nervous that they can hardly blow into their instruments, she says. But that fear turns into confidence as they listen to others and think, "I can do that."

Listening is how 12-year-old M. Ade Irawan memorized nearly 100 songs. He is blind and has never read sheet music in

Braille. He started playing traditional Indonesian songs on a toy piano, says his mother, Endang Irawan. The Farnsworth School seventh-grader taught himself to improvise, and floored a jam session audience.

"It totally blew everybody away with this old Eddie Harris tune," Deutsch says. "Just the looks of the students in the audience, the looks on the faces of the parents, the other people who just come to hear these kids was, 'Wow.' The kid got all this applause. He was just beaming."

The moment exemplified the program's intent to give children a venue to improvise. *Bethany Carson*



Photograph courtesy of Endang Irawan

M. Ade Irawan, a 12-year-old jazz pianist, who is blind

Diverse stories shared

Rogers Park, a lakeshore community on Chicago's North Side, is considered to be one of the city's most economically and culturally diverse neighborhoods. Its residents speak more than 80 languages and hail from such countries as Somalia, Pakistan and Palestine.

The neighborhood's blend of cultural heritages has made it the perfect place for the Cuentos (meaning stories) Foundation, which aims to make art accessible through community projects and research aimed at promoting understanding among people of different cultures, says Michele Feder-Nadoff, the group's director and founder.

"We try to facilitate cross-cultural *intercambios*, or interchanges, between other countries and the area," says Feder-Nadoff, who is an artist and a 30-year resident of Rogers Park. "We are a very, very grass-roots organization, and the diverse community helps people identify with [our] mission."

The good fit between the community

and the 8-year-old foundation meant the organization recently has been able to expand its activities, which include workshops and residencies, dance performance, culture celebrations and art exhibitions. But the group began with a single project called *Ritmo de Fuego*, or Rhythm of Fire.

Ritmo de Fuego aims to link the large Mexican-American population of Chicago with people from the Mexican state of Michoacan through the art of copper-smithing. Since its start in 1998, the project has brought artisans from Santa Clara del Cobre to Chicago three times to lead coppersmithing workshops. The fourth visit is expected to take place in May.

Soon, Feder-Nadoff says she saw that *Ritmo del Fuego* could be used as a model for other efforts to share cultural traditions. "Especially in Rogers Park, we thought it was relevant to all kinds of different people. Basically everyone has come from other countries."

Grant funding has helped the Cuentos Foundation expand programs. The group

also receives annual general operating money from the Illinois Arts Council and from the City Arts Grant through the city of Chicago's Department of Cultural Affairs.

"As an artist and a founder, my vision has really been that the artists' practice is part of the community," Feder-Nadoff says. "It should include social justice and not just be limited to museums and galleries. We're trying to break that line down so that people who are in the community can have access."

Feder-Nadoff, who is Jewish, worked in 2002 on an exhibition with a Palestinian artist. The two did have conflicts, she says, and each dealt with painful issues in their work. "People try to oversimplify things. What we're trying to do is not get rid of the complexity in order for people to learn about each other."

"Nowadays, multiculturalism and ethnicity have become almost capitalized and appropriated," she says. "A lot of organizations trying to support diversity, a lot of times try to make everyone be the same."

Vera Leopold

And the winner is . . .

Marigold Goetz, a student at the University of Illinois at Chicago, received the Governor's Medallion of Excellence in the Annual Collegiate Artists Competition for 2006 for her oil painting, *Princess and the Peacock*. Meanwhile, entries for the next year's competition will be eligible if postmarked by February 28, 2007.

Goetz, who is from LaGrange, was one of 289 students to submit entries for the juried competition, which was judged by Chicago painter Phyllis Bramson. In all, 699 entries were submitted to the contest sponsored by Gov. Rod Blagojevich, the state boards of higher education and community colleges and the Federation of Independent Illinois Colleges and Universities.

For this, the third year of the contest, Bramson selected 55 finalists, and four, including Goetz, received major, named awards. Five other students were winners in specific mediums, while two others received honorable mentions.

The other major award winners were Northeastern Illinois University student

Kristin Haas of Des Plaines for her acrylic on masonite piece titled *Cityscape*; Western Illinois University student Whitney Johnson of Rockford for her painting, *Self Portrait as Bald*; and Joliet Junior College student Jason Vote of Joliet for his drawing *Invisible (Self Portrait)*.

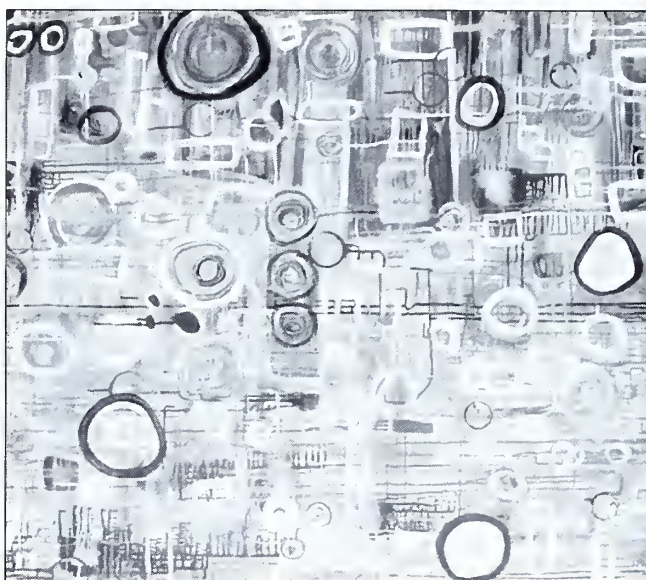
Also, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville student Linda Brady of Belleville won the drawing category for her charcoal piece, *Rembrandt*. Olivet Nazarene University student Susan Fleming of Powell, Ohio, won in the electronic media category for *Kaleidoscope*. (To see Fleming's project and other finalists' works go to <http://www.ibhc.org/Art/Gallery/default.htm>.)

Other category winners are: Robert Morris College student Salvador Jimenez of Chicago in painting for his mixed media work, *I*; SIUE student Jason Schipkowski of Edwardsville in photography for *Untitled #2*; and Southwestern Illinois College student Helena Langley of Granite City in sculpture for *Walk with Me*. UIC student Leroy Stevens of Arlington Heights received an honorable mention for his acrylic on canvas piece, *Spotlight 88*, and WIU student Bryan Yelk of Ashland received an honorable mention for his sculpture, *A Symbol of Might and Memory*.

The works were displayed earlier this year at Robert Morris College in Chicago. Works of finalists in the 2007 contest will be on display for six weeks beginning in May at the Koehnline Museum of Art at Oakton Community College in Des Plaines.

Beginning with the 2008 competition, the School of the Art Institute of Chicago will host the competition for five years at its West Loop Gallery in Chicago.

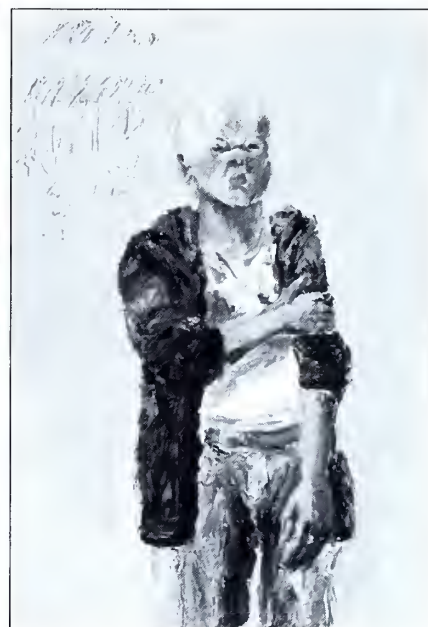
The Editors



Cityscape, acrylic on masonite. Kristin Haas



Princess and the Peacock, oil. Marigold Goetz



Self Portrait as Bald, oil on canvas. Whitney Johnson

PRAIRIE PAINTER

Illinois will miss an adopted son

Billy Morrow Jackson captured Illinois as few artists have. Paintings with such titles as *Argenta*, *Champaign*, *Homer's Crib*, *La Place*, *Mansfield*, *Monroe*, *Philo Bound*, *South of Sidney*, *Then North to Neoga* tell many stories of life in this state, each in its quiet, colorful, contemplative way. Many of his works, some of them massive yet intricate murals, grace public buildings, including the state's Capitol and its flagship university.

He died June 16 in Urbana at age 80, just days after signing copies of his latest book, *On This Island: An Artist's View of Martha's Vineyard*, a collaboration with his wife Siti Mariah Jackson. An earlier book, *Interpretations of Time and Light*, chronicles his paintings over four decades. He was a friend to this magazine, generously giving permission to use his paintings for our covers in December 2000 and May 2005.

An emeritus professor of art at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Jackson taught for 33 years, retiring in 1987. Born in Kansas City in 1926, he grew up with the vast landscapes of big sky and rolling fields of grain.

Chancellor Richard Herman, in a speech last spring, passed on his understanding of the power in Jackson's Illinois landscapes. "Billy Morrow Jackson reimagined our world. He saw it fresh. He did not see a bland, repetitive countryside without texture. He saw nothing but texture. Amid stark isolation, he saw beauty and resolve and possibility. He didn't try to remake the world before him. Through his eyes moments of ordinary Illinois life became epic. Through his eyes, he saw our piece of the planet exactly as it was and yet entirely anew — at the same time."

Yet Jackson's murals tell stories in a different way. One of his earliest murals was of St. Louis, where he began his artistic instruction at Washington University. He came to the University of Illinois for his master of fine arts degree and stayed on as a professor. He completed *We the People: The Land-Grant College Heritage* for the university in 1987. *Cosmic Blink* was unveiled at Parkland College in Champaign two years later, and the next year his mural *The Key* was painted in the Capitol.

His biographer, Howard E. Wooden, says in *Billy Morrow Jackson* one noteworthy feature of his murals "is the consistent recognition of the fundamental role of leadership as the basis for introducing and achieving change and, in particular, for making positive contributions to social, cultural and technological progress, and thus the advancement of humankind. But perhaps the single most significant message is the glorification of knowledge and learning as bases for liberating the individual."

Siti Jackson, in a personal eulogy, describes her husband: "He was not only a great artist — my role model — but also an inspiration to me, and [he] touched so many people around the world. I hope through my artwork I can give the viewer another chance to view Billy and his memory in a different perspective."

Beverley Scobell

Photograph courtesy of Siti Mariah Jackson



Billy Morrow Jackson



Interlude, watercolor, 2004. Siti Mariah Jackson

RESURRECTION OF A LANDMARK

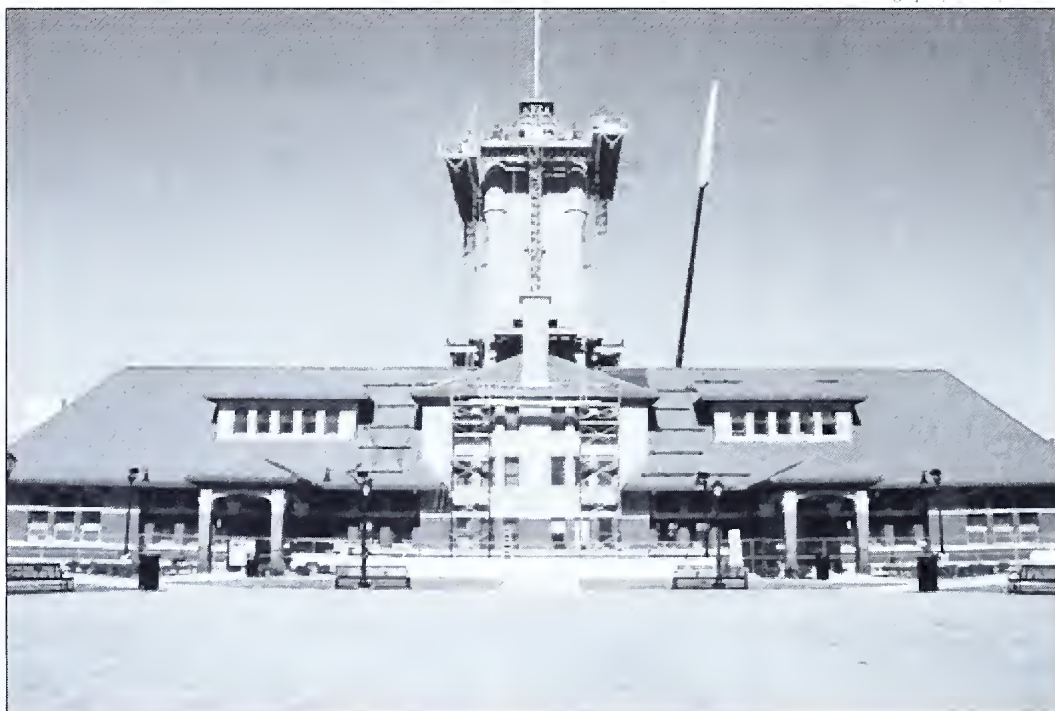
The city of Springfield is regaining a landmark that used to chime official Illinois Central time: Union Station's 110-foot, medieval-style clock tower, designed in 1897 by Francis T. Bacon. The clock tower was removed in 1946, but freight and passenger trains chartered by the Illinois Central Railroad passed through Union Station until 1971. The clock tower will rise above a new park.

Photograph courtesy of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library



Reconstruction of the clock tower is part of the \$12.5 million rehabilitation of Union Station, which will house a visitors' center, office space and meeting rooms managed by the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency. The renovation is expected to be completed in February.

Photograph by Bethany Carson



The renovated station, seen from its south side, will complement the adjacent Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum complex, which will display architectural blueprints and other artifacts in an exhibit titled, Union Station: Tracks Through Time 1897-2007, until early 2007.

New leader revives Hull's social aims

Lisa Yun Lee, named this year as director of the Jane Addams Hull-House Museum at the University of Illinois at Chicago, plans to expand the museum's audience by developing new programs to connect current social problems with the same issues that Addams addressed historically.

Lee is the founder and former director of The Public Square, a program with the Illinois Humanities Council that holds public forums, documentaries and performances on issues of social justice. She is creating similar opportunities for public debate through the venue of the Hull-House Museum.

"Arts can be a springboard for lots of civic discourse and how it's also really an essential part of creating a full democracy," she says. "Visitors [to the museum] should have a sense that they are invited to join the dialogue and make a relevant contribution."

Jane Addams, who founded the Hull-House social settlement in Chicago in 1889, was an activist who worked for peace, women's and children's rights, the arts and social reform.

"I don't think there's any one person more relevant than Jane Addams right now," Lee says.

In the past few months, the Hull-House Museum has launched several program series, including *Conversations on Peace and Justice*, featuring human rights activists; *Dance and Democracy*, which hosted prima ballerina Maria Tallchief; and a labor film series, which included a documentary about Wal-Mart. All of the free events have been filled to capacity.

"Other organizations have become entrenched in single issues, kind of forced to focus," says Lee. "Hull-House is attractive because it's comprehensive. It's a way to link together lots of issues because it has such a rich history."

The new programs are intended to appeal to a broader contemporary audience. In October, the museum screened a documentary, *Turning a Corner*, that examines forms of invisible and exploited labor and includes interviews with former prostitutes in Chicago.

Lee says she wants to increase UIC students' understanding of the issues. But she wants to attract community members to events, as well. "The surrounding community really sees UIC as an urban ivory tower," she says. "For me the museum represents both a physical and metaphorical space between the university and the community."

This May, Gov. Rod Blagojevich signed Jane Addams Day into law. The Hull-House Museum is gearing up for a family-oriented celebration of that day, December 10.

Vera Leopold

Photograph courtesy of the University of Illinois at Chicago



Lisa Yun Lee is the new director of the Jane Addams Hull-House Museum in Chicago.

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Art and ethnicity

Illinois' culture is a vivid tapestry woven by a multitude of artists whose ethnicity is central to their work. That metaphor illustrates the spirit of "art and ethnicity," the theme of this year's annual arts issue, the 11th the magazine has produced. This take on the arts is relevant because the pattern becomes more intricate when the state's immigrant and nonwhite population grows.

The number of foreign-born Illinoisans climbed to nearly 1.7 million last year — a double-digit percentage increase from 2000. Of the 12.4 million people who live in this state, 14 percent were born outside the United States. Add another 1.5 million Illinoisans who are children of immigrants. Turns out, immigrants and their offspring account for 26 percent of the state's population.

That population is diverse, representing more than 100 countries of origin. But the majority of Illinois immigrants come from a trio of nations spread across three continents: Mexico, Poland and India. Mexico alone is the birthplace of nearly 700,000 Illinoisans.

Illinois Issues hopes to give our readers a sense of the ways in which the state's multicultural history has enriched its artistic heritage.

Take a closer look at individual

threads: bright yellows, reds and greens in photographs that tell the story of Chicago's predominantly Mexican Pilsen and Little Village neighborhoods. We offer a view of the barrio through photographer Paul D'Amato's images. "The color he uses is not only painterly but essential in portraying a barrio culture of fellow visual artists — muralists, spray-paint artists and taggers," writes Stuart Dybek in his foreword to D'Amato's book *Barrio: Photographs from Chicago's Pilsen and Little Village*.

Next comes the deep, dark down-home blues as interpreted by Sterling Plumpp, a Chicagoan who expresses himself on paper rather than in song. Then we take a look at the modernistic petroglyphs that Bridgeport's Zhou Brothers splash across their abstract art. The creative duo left their native China with \$30 between them and now sell their artwork for as much as \$250,000 per piece. Talk about the American Dream.

Beyond Chicago, we take a look at the bicultural vision of Malaysian-born Champaign artist Siti Mariah Jackson. We profile Southern Illinois University Carbondale art professor Najjar Abdul-Musawwir, who describes a display of his paintings as "a visual discussion about Islamic art and the African-American experience."

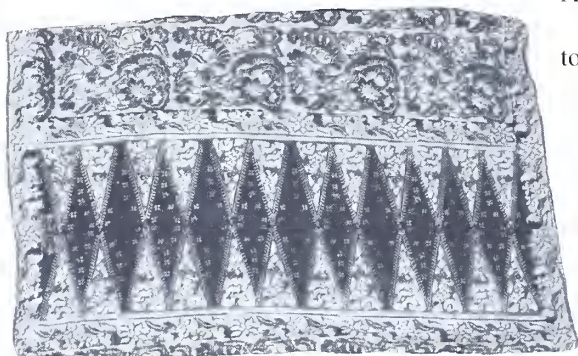
We also explore the question of rights to cultural artifacts: Do they belong

exclusively to the nation of origin or are museums responsible for preserving a global heritage? Can art be a means of producing cultural understanding? The Zhou Brothers achieved one of their goals when they created a performance piece in 2000 for the World Economic Forum in Switzerland: to use art as an instrument for global unity.

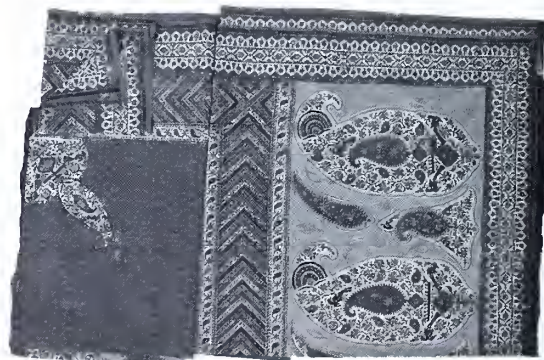
In Rogers Park, a neighborhood on Chicago's far North Side, international unity is practiced at the local level. That ethnically diverse area is home to the Cuentos Foundation, which uses art programs as a way of sharing cultures. Artistic Director Michele Feder-Nadoff founded *Cuentos* (stories) in the spirit of *tikkun haolom*, a Jewish principle that says each person has a responsibility to help heal the world. The foundation's motto: "Art giving voice to the stories of our diverse communities. *Arte que da voz a los cuentos de nuestras comunidades diversas*."

Born to a Mexican and an American who grew to regard each other as "one of them," Illinois author Luis Alberto Urrea writes in his autobiographical *nobody's son*, "When someone won't shake my hand because she suddenly realizes I'm half Mexican . . . I comfort myself with these words: 'I know how much color and beauty we all add to the American mix.'"

The Editors



Left: Batik sarong from Malaysia. Right: Tapestry from Iran. The artifacts belong to the Spurrlock Museum at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.



Rights to a culture

Illinois' experiences cast repatriation of cultural items in a better light, but the state's museum policies vary on issues of ownership

by Vera Leopold

In mid-September, a delegation of high-ranking officials from Kenya met with representatives of the Illinois State Museum in a ceremony marked by many speeches and group photographs. Center stage, displayed in a lined box, was the *kigango*, a decorated wooden post that was part of the museum's collection before officials there learned last spring it originally had been stolen from a Kenyan family.

The delegation that traveled to Illinois to accept the statue on behalf of the family included three representatives from the National Museums of Kenya; Suleiman Shakombo,

the Minister of State for National Heritage; and the Kenyan ambassador to the United States, Peter Ogego. The Kenyan officials took a tour of the

positive and uplifting."

Such incidents have cast a more favorable light in Illinois on the repatriation of cultural items from other countries,

museum's exhibits, and Illinois State Museum representatives are invited to attend the ceremony in Kenya in which the *kigango* will be presented to the family.

"We were really excited by the interest from the Kenyan government in the whole ceremony," says Bonnie Styles, director of the Illinois State Museum.

"We thought it went very well. The whole interaction was just incredibly

Photograph courtesy of the Illinois State Museum



Representatives of Kenya participated in a ceremony at the Illinois State Museum to commemorate the return of a stolen kigango, pictured above, to their nation.

Urbana museum holds the whole world

The Spurlock Museum at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign collects, preserves and exhibits artifacts of global cultural heritage. Some of its most important pieces, including a leaf from the Gutenberg Bible, were collected by the first directors of the museums' original predecessors — the classical and European culture museums — which opened in 1911 and were housed on a single floor of Lincoln Hall.

Over the years, anthropological



A drinking bowl used by the Canelos Quicha people of Amazonian Ecuador

interests of the university expanded to include non-Western, ancient and Medieval artifacts. The 42,000 holdings include Mesopotamian tablets, a frieze panel from the Parthenon and Stone Age figurines from southern Europe and west Asia. (Some of those items are pictured here, courtesy of the Spurlock.)

Public access to the artifacts was expanded when the Urbana facility opened in 2002 through a gift of William and Clarice Spurlock.

a contentious issue for museums that has drawn national attention in recent years.

Several nations, including Greece and Italy, are seeking artifacts that have long been held in American museums. Both countries claim many antiquities held at the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles and at other U.S. institutions were illicitly taken outside their borders.

Museums have phrased their responses to such claims carefully, with many only saying they will consider them on a case-by-case basis.

In 2001, questions arose about whether artwork at the Art Institute of Chicago had been stolen from its original owners by Nazis during World War II. For several years, the museum has been researching the ownership history, or provenance, of European paintings and sculptures in its collection that were acquired in the period between 1933 and 1945.

Countries' requests for return and claims of museums holding looted artifacts has drawn increased media attention, putting added pressure on institutions to watch their steps.

"There's been these big, very public bad acts of institutions [having looted or stolen materials], so people have probably seen those," says Helen Robbins, repatriation specialist at the Field Museum in Chicago.

Some institutions are disputing the source countries' ownership claims on pieces held in their collections. Hampton University in Virginia, to which the

Kenyan family's second kigango was traced, at first refused to return it, claiming there was no proof of ownership. Faced with negative media attention, the university finally agreed to send it to Kenya on permanent loan, still arguing the item was legally acquired. For other institutions, caution has become the rule.

"We all know there's some unscrupulous dealers out there," says Douglas Brewer, director of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign's Spurlock Museum and an archaeologist who has traveled to the Middle East. "And it happens here in North America all the time, too."

Museums turn to two documents for guidelines when acquiring artifacts from other countries: the 2004 report released by the Association of Art Museum Directors, an organization that includes 175 directors of large art museums in the United States, Canada and Mexico, and the UNESCO Convention of 1970.

The museum directors' association report, which lays out guidelines on collecting archaeological materials and ancient art, was issued in response to escalating international concerns that museums were acquiring art that was illegally obtained from the countries of origin. It states that director members should "balance the obligation to preserve and provide public access to the world's shared artistic heritage with the duty to collect responsibly."

The report also recommends that museums research the provenance of a work of art before acquisition and obtain as much information and written documentation as possible from sellers and donors.

The guidelines are not binding and instruct museums to use their own judgment in acquisition cases where enough information cannot be obtained. Still, many museums follow them.

"With respect to new acquisitions, we do apply the [association of museum directors] guidelines in our review of objects we are considering acquiring," says Chai Lee, spokesman at the Art Institute of Chicago.

Other large museums, recognizing their increasingly high profile in the eyes of the public, have established their own firm policies on acquisition.

"We make a strong statement on ethics and collecting. We have a policy of no collecting from dubious sources," says Robbins of the Field Museum. "We're not going to be like certain institutions and just buy anything."

The UNESCO Convention of 1970, which has been ratified or accepted by more than 100 countries, is aimed at preventing the illicit import and export of cultural property from nations. Under the convention, countries can request special restrictions on the trafficking of their cultural items.

Kenya, one of the recent countries to ratify the convention, is seeking these



Double maternity figure from Tanzania in east Africa. A child is on the figure's back.



Ifugao culture rice guardian idol from northern Island of Luzon, Philippines



A contemporary storage jar from Ecuador made by the late Pastora Vargas Guatatuca

restrictions. This year, that African nation designated its *vigango* (plural of *kigango*) statues “inalienable” or “singular” objects. Under the convention, such items cannot be trafficked to other countries.

“The designation means that these objects stand for the core identity of that nation, something that would never enter our imagination to be sold, like the Liberty Bell or the Declaration of Independence for Americans,” says Monica Udvardy, a University of Kentucky anthropologist who played a key role in demonstrating the stolen *vigango*’s ownership.

The convention also states that museums should not acquire any works of ancient art of questionable provenance or known to have been removed in contravention of the country of origin’s laws after 1970. But, because the United States did not ratify the convention until 1983, different museums use different cutoff dates in their individual policies. Many institutions have not officially set dates at all.

The museum directors’ guidelines and the UNESCO convention do not address the return of artifacts already held in museums’ collections. In the United States, the federal Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act provides for the return of specific Native American cultural items to their descendants. But this law only concerns repatriation to tribes within the United States. No international accord deals with the issue of repatriation of artifacts to countries of origin.

Such a law, Lee says, “would never happen as a practical matter.”

Consequently, many museums have no set policies on returning items that are sought by other nations. Lee says that the Art Institute “review[s] each case individually.”

In 2002, the Art Institute of Chicago was one of 18 international museums to sign a statement titled *Declaration on the Importance and Value of Universal Museums*. The authors of the document argued that the role of museums is to serve and preserve the heritage of all nations, not just one. It states that “objects acquired in earlier times must be viewed in the light of different sensitivities and values, reflective of the earlier era,” and that “museums too provide a valid and valuable context for objects that were long ago displaced from their original source.”

The question of whether current standards should be retroactively applied to items that museums acquired decades ago is one that many older institutions are facing. And the source information of long-held items in collections can be difficult to trace.

“Every museum has things that predate the convention,” says Styles of the Illinois State Museum, which opened in 1877. “The farther you go back, probably the less documentation you might have of how some things were actually acquired.”

Museums that are newer or smaller may have a better ability to ensure their compliance with guidelines. This is so at UIUC’s Spurlock Museum, which has been open four years and is undergoing the museums’ accreditation process.

“We are well aware of the issues, but the museum hasn’t been in a position, hasn’t been around long enough, to have acquired those types of artifacts that other institutions are dealing with,” says Brewer, the museum’s director.

Still, the museum is carefully sifting through the more than 42,000 pieces in its collection to make sure they were legally obtained before the Spurlock acquired them.

“State-controlled museums probably keep very, very tight policies,” Brewer says. “To have a problem arise would not be good for the museum, or for the university, so we pay close attention to it.”

Illinois has seen two landmark cases in which agreements for the return of cultural items held by museums have been made with uncharacteristic ease and good will.

When the Field Museum repatriated human remains and funerary objects to the Haida people of British Columbia in 2003, a Haida delegation performed a ceremonial celebration dance at the museum, and museum staff later traveled to the Haida’s home, the Queen Charlotte Islands. At the state museum, circumstances aligned to allow the *kigango*’s return. “Everything was so clear-cut for us,” Styles says. “Here there was a clear link that this was a piece that belonged to a particular individual, with photographic documentation of it.”

Still, Styles says that the interaction with Kenyan representatives has cleared the way for continued communication.

“I think we made some lasting relationships. We had a lot of really engaging conversations. Certainly there are a lot of common interests among those of us who work in museums.” □



Tukuna bark cloth mask from Mari Acu, Brazil, showing the face of a monkey demon



Reproduction of a bloodletting cup, circa the early Roman Empire. Acquired in 1916



A Guro Zamle Society ceremonial antelope mask from the Ivory Coast in western Africa

Barrio

Photographs depict Chicago's Pilsen and Little Village neighborhoods

Photographs by Paul D'Amato

When he took that right turn off Halsted Street to 18th Street back in 1988, Paul D'Amato thought he was about to take his last pictures of Chicago. D'Amato, now a photography professor at Columbia College Chicago, had plans to take a teaching position in Maine. But what he found in Pilsen, then the city's largest Mexican neighborhood, caught his attention and held tight. "I had been to a lot of different neighborhoods in Chicago, but this one had an aura to it," he writes. "It was dark and colorful, full of texture, energy."

By the end of that first year of teaching in the wooded Northeast, D'Amato was heading back to Pilsen, "a sweltering, treeless neighborhood made of concrete, bricks, and asphalt — a place that stayed hot well after the sun set and was relieved only when someone illegally opened a pump, borrowed a piece of lake, and flooded the street."

He returned for the next 13 summers. The results of those visits were published earlier this year by the University of Chicago Press as the art book *Barrio: Photographs from Chicago's Pilsen and Little Village*.

Initially, D'Amato believed he was documenting gangs, but he eventually

realized that his true interest was in the larger community of Pilsen and the adjacent Little Village neighborhood to the southwest.

"In capturing the richness and vigor of the community, Paul D'Amato revels in the broad palette of human emotions. The pictures are gritty, but never unremittingly grim," writes Pilsen native and author Stuart Dybek in his foreword to *Barrio*.

Gang members D'Amato met served as his key to the community, allowing him to collect invitations to house parties, weddings and *quinceañeras* (the Latin-American coming-out party for 15-year-old girls).

Why Pilsen? "At first it was a kind of predictable documentary answer: urban neighborhood, Latino culture, etc.," writes D'Amato, whose photographs are in the permanent collections of several museums, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and the Art Institute of Chicago and the Museum of Contemporary Photography in Chicago. "Then it became a little more personal as I saw the hood as a kind of metaphor for immigration itself and a

contemporary expression of what my father's neighborhood might have been like in Boston at the turn of the century."

But when D'Amato returned to Chicago to live in 2001, he found that the Pilsen he had known was gone. The home values had skyrocketed, and the neighborhood's only barrier to the Loop was an expanded University of Illinois at Chicago campus. "The place just feels more subdued — literally and figuratively." Paint, which D'Amato describes as "butt-ugly brown," now covered the graffiti. "I know it's not as if someone went into the Sistine Chapel with a roller, but all of this graf", some of which was truly beautiful, was a direct reflection of the life of the place." He writes, "All I know is, what once was will never be again. I'm just glad I was here for so much of it before it ended." □

The Editors

Plaza Garibaldi, 2002





4th of July, 1991



Twister, 1995



Untitled, 2001



Girl with Lingerie Catalogue, 1988



Couple in Alley, 2003



Untitled, 2003



Father & Daughter, 1991



Triplets, 1995



Man & Dog, 1990



Weighing Dough Balls, 1996



Untitled, 2002



Sad Man with Two Women, 2002

At right: Leti & Mario, 1994





Folkloric dancer, 1997

Blues poet

Chicago writer Sterling Plump gives the lowdown

by Maureen Foertsch McKinney

Poet Sterling Plump was born in Clinton, Miss., about 40 miles from what could rightfully be considered a part of the Delta region that produced Chicago blues legends Muddy Waters, Willie Dixon and Howlin' Wolf. He still speaks, writes and feels the language. "I think I'm essentially a blues poet who also writes jazz," says Plump, who retired in 2001 as an English and African-American Studies professor with emeritus status from the University of Illinois at Chicago, where he had taught for 30 years.

One of the first poets — if not the first — to emulate the blues was Langston Hughes, the major Harlem Renaissance figure who wrote his first poem when he was an adolescent living in downstate Lincoln. Hughes' first book, a poetry collection published in 1926, was called *The Weary Blues*.

"He tries to create the sound, syncopation, the technique of the blues singer in the poetry," 20th century American literature specialist Barbara Burkhardt says of Hughes. "That's an important aspect of his work: trying to mimic the sound, the improvisation

of blues in poetry, which is not easy."

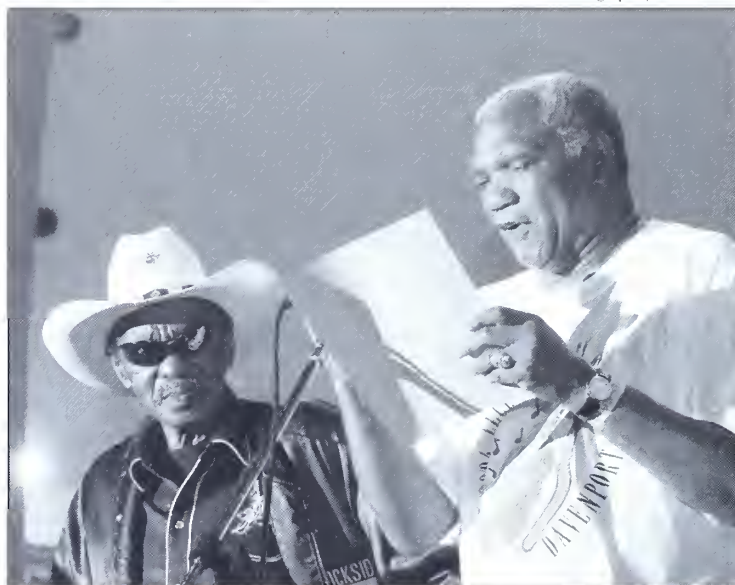
To explain the difficulty facing the blues poet, Burkhardt, an assistant English professor at the University of Illinois at Springfield, cites a singer who was a major influence on Hughes: Bessie Smith. "She does all kinds of slides. She will do things like break right in the middle of a word or break in the middle of a sentence. It's hard to show slides and stretches and to also, I think, capture the real slowness with which a lot of the music was performed."

Plump, who grew up listening to the

blues as sung by relatives working beside him in a Mississippi cotton field, made it his mission to express the blues through the printed word. He is one of a group of contemporary Chicago poets who writes blues poetry. Others, who might be more accurately described as poets who have written in the blues style, include the late Illinois Poet Laureate Gwendolyn Brooks; Haki Madhubuti, director of the Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing Program at Chicago State University, who is not only a poet and nonfiction writer but

publisher of the Third World Press; and one of his co-founders at the press, Carolyn Rodgers, who wrote in *Jazz: Mood Indigo*: *your life all in pieces, you have/ fallen, fallen down/ and my fingers and my soul are blue, blue/ . . .*

Plump, a visiting professor at Chicago State University, has published more than a dozen books, including *Blues Narratives*, *Ornate With Smoke* and the most recent, *Velvet BeBop Kente Cloth*. Honors he's collected include the Richard Wright Literary Excellence Award for outstanding contributions



Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown listens to Chicago writer Sterling Plump read a poem he composed in the musician's honor. Brown has since died.

Photograph by David L. Fox



Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown plays the blues at the 2004 Mississippi Valley Blues Festival.

to literature, Illinois Arts Council Literary awards, the Carl Sandburg Literary Award for poetry and a Keeping the Blues Alive Award from The Blues Foundation based in Memphis.

He still spreads word of the blues by conducting workshops and participating in the annual Mississippi Valley Blues Festival in Davenport, Iowa, for which he composes a poem each year for an honored artist. They have included Muddy Waters' band member James Cotton and Odetta.

In a photograph from the 2004 festival, Sterling Plumpp looks a bit like his name, with short silvery hair and a round expressive face. He recently told *Illinois Issues* his own blues narrative. What follows is an edited version of that discussion.

• • •

It is true that I was born on a cotton plantation in 1940 to maternal grandparents who were born in 1880 and 1890, respectively. Their parents had been slaves and had lived on land very close to where I grew up. And it is true that I did not attend any school of any kind until I was 8, and then I did not attend for any more than three or four months a year. The thing was we had to be big enough to walk to school four or five miles. We had to take care of

ourselves. That much is true.

And it is true that when my grandfather died in Jackson, Miss., I was 15 years old and in the seventh grade and then went to a very fine Catholic school [Holy Ghost High School], and I eventually was valedictorian of my class of 1960. That much is true.

Southern school folklore, wisdom — all of that — was ingrained in me growing up. And then I'm put in a situation where I'm looking at life through the prism of middle-class blacks, some of whose parents are doctors, civil rights lawyers, newspaper editors, dentists. I went into that environment; I mean it was almost like I had a way of looking at the life that I had lived for 15 years in the rearview mirror of this kind of privileged environment that I went to school in.

It's true, I picked cotton. What happened was: I was 5 or 6 years old and they gave me a flour sack. I would pick cotton along the rows with one of my grandparents and then, maybe when I was 10 or so, I had a sack and I was expected to take a row the same as an adult picker. So I picked cotton.

Coming up in this culture, which is primarily oral, I cannot remember a time in my life when the blues was not in my imagination. My uncles and aunts were always singing the blues in the field. They had what was known as a gramophone; that is a kind of phonograph that runs

by battery power. And then I would hear them played on at night.

The blues is expressed with a feeling, almost moaned. They talk about hard times, but they always talk about reality. They don't talk about hard times in a hopeless manner. That's not the blues. You know what I'm talking about, you know, the blues might be something like:

'I got up this morning. I got me a jug and I laid back down. I got up this morning. I got me a jug and I laid back down. I was searching for the future but the blues was all I found. Hard times has come again' [from singer Percy Mayfield's *My Jug and I*].

The blues is sung in a way that is intended to get rid of the blues. Blues are not sung to give people the blues; the blues are sung to get rid of the blues.

It's almost the same situation you find in rap lyrics. I don't know about rap music, but when they are talking about all of the bad things they have had, the drugs and all that, in identifying it, they're confronting the irritant in the existence. It's almost as if singing the blues takes the poison out of that.

• • •

His book of poems, *Blues Narratives*, is soaked in the sorrow of a man who lost the mother he never had.

From #13:



Langston Hughes

*... You pay my fare
wells with a request*

*The irony
you telling a son
stranded on a bridge
between love and ambivalence how*

*to assist you on
to the stage of exit*

*but the morgue
cosmetician thinks
you are going
to a party*

*I order him
to remove powder
and rouge*

*so blues
lines can still
reside in this symphony
of night which is
your face*

*When I
ask for bread
ask for medicine
ask for clothes
ask for rent*

*When I
ask for bread
ask for medicine
ask for clothes
ask for rent*

*They say
Yesterday
that money was all
ready spent . . .*

• • •

Let me explain *Blues Narratives*.
My mother had died. I was with her when
she was operated on, and she had called me
in and asked me to take care of her funeral,
and she had asked me to forgive her.

Now, the situation with my mother is:
I have absolutely no concept of my mother
in my imagination as my mother. Zero.
When I was born, I was raised by my
grandmother so much that I don't even
remember my mother as my mother. And
then, I never lived with my mother until
I was about 15 or 16 years old. You know, I
was out of wedlock and she [my mother]



Bessie Smith

married and then she married again.

What I tried to do in *Blues Narratives*
was to have a dialogue with her, but she's
dead. Now the disconnect between my
mother and me comes out of this blues
tradition. By having her mind in blues
song, it meant that she was always con-
fronting reality. That was the only way I
thought I could represent her in the poem.

Let me see, what I will read is what a
great-aunt told me about one of my slave
ancestors. She told me about this ancestor
as I'm trying to write a family history. This
woman's name was Tympe, and I was told
that she was born in 1772 and died in 1908.
That would have made her 135 years. Now,
I don't know about that, but in searching
through certificates and census [records], I
do know that she had a son that was born in
1828 and I do know that she was born in
North Carolina.

*... Swing low
sweet tightening
ropes/Swing
low/My names
coming from shadows. . .*

My main influences? One of
them was the great Jimmy Baldwin.
Particularly in *Go Tell It on the
Mountain*, *Notes of a Native Son* and,
to a certain extent, *Nobody Knows
My Name*, he is trying to describe his
language. For me, being Southern, being
African American, [he] had a great
deal of work that really inflamed my



The Great Migration of African Americans from the South to the North, Linda Mathis

imagination. James Baldwin, he said something I found that really turned a switch on in my imagination. He said that it was only when he was in Europe from '47 to '57 that he — while listening to the great blues singer Bessie Smith — recognized what he must have sounded like when he was a child. He developed a thought that blues could serve as a narrative example of a cleaner imagination, an omnipotence. This was getting me to thinking and listening to blues. This was not about trying to replicate a blues song. I was trying to develop an imaginative literary language that would have the same impact.

Langston Hughes, and the great poet Sterling Brown, had impact on me. But the poet I learned blues from was Amiri Baraka because of the way he phrased without always rhyming. It's the way he used ellipses, the way he phrased, the way he used metaphors, for lack of a better word, allowed me to update the blues.

Ralph Ellison, who has been maligned because some people thought maybe he was not political enough, really felt that the blues, as a ritual and a celebration, was one of the major art forms. I have tried to come to the blues in respect of a great musical tradition and tried to look at it as a kind of platform from which to launch my literary imagination. That's what I think of when I write poems.

More recently, a man of my age, Haki Madhubuti (Don L. Lee) — a great deal of his work deals with vernacular

language as did the work of Carolyn Rodgers, and of course the world-class poet Gwendolyn Brooks: *A Street in Bronzeville*, *Bean Eaters* and, to some extent, *In the Mecca*, you get a sophisticated kind of blues line, and it works.

I'm a part of the Great Migration [of blacks from the South to the North] between 1938 and 1960. I spent a great deal of time over the last 45 years witnessing and trying to understand the great blues singers, the Delta blues singer Muddy Waters, Junior Wells, Buddy Guy, Koko Taylor. I have spent a great deal of time in clubs listening. And I've spent a great deal of time watching the great bebop jazz musicians — people with names like Fred Anderson, Von Freeman — because I see this relationship between blues and jazz. I just think that jazz is nothing but the imaginative treatment of blues by extremely capable musicians. That's the way I've always seen it. At the very beginning, there was Duke Ellington and Count Basie, Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker, very sophisticated people on their instruments who found their voice, and it's not vocal music. I see a relationship to what they achieve in their music. [It] is a wonderful example of what a poet ought strive to achieve within his or her language and his or her metaphor.

I will read something. I'm gonna start with something that's obviously blues because it's a blues lyric and segue into something that's obviously jazz:

*Chicago/Chicago sorrows
they/All
ways/So blue. Empty pockets/Every
day/Friday
the rent is/Due. Chicago/Chicago.
Big Shoulders/Bronzeville
Got/No
where/Lay my spirit. Lord/Knows . . .*

**from *Eighteen
in Velvet BeBop Kente Cloth*
by Sterling Plumm**

*. . . my daddy./ He had nothing.
And it rubbed off/On me
when I/Was born.*

*I am/So glad
I got/Nothing.
It/Gon be here
when I am dead and/Gone.*

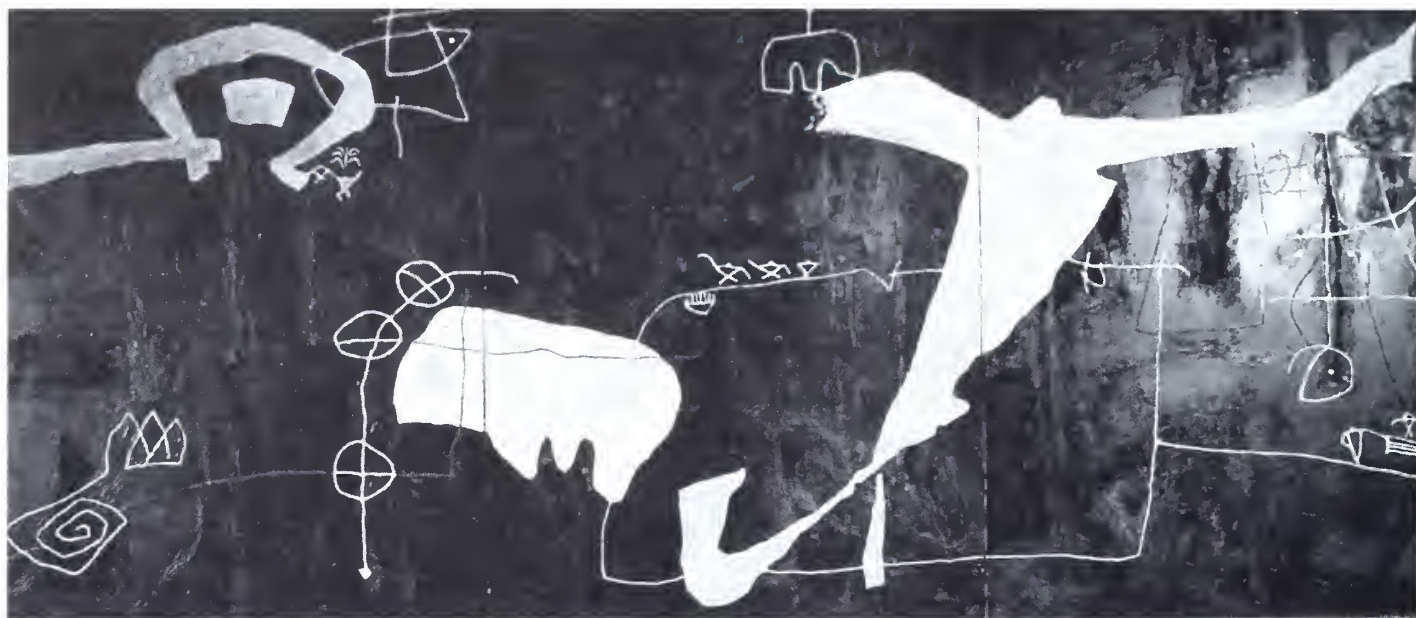
*I drink/Three quarTet
offensive cries/Every
day I rise/My work shift
is forever and for/Ever
green/Dreams flush as weeping
willows/Reaching . . .*

I think Langston Hughes understood when he wrote *The Weary Blues* in 1926. He was ostensibly looking at American vernacular in the form of black vernacular expression that made the blues, and I think its most imaginative expression is jazz. You do more with intonation. You intuit more. You're trying to invent a language that approximates the aesthetic, the imagination of the jazz creator. There are a number of spoken-word, hip-hop-influenced artists; many of them have not written books. There's a lot of blues influence. But when I think of a poem, I think of a different aesthetic. While in the hip-hop spoken work there's blues, I only call something poetry if I can see it as a written script. I think that without a written script I would call it a performance. I've been trained not to speak it, but to write it down. I think that that's how you preserve it. I think that's how you shape it to make it last. □

JOURNEYS

Artists follow their visions down individual paths

by Beverley Scobell



Dream of Chicago, 1987. Mixed media on canvas

EAST-WEST SYMBIOSIS

Brothers speak to the world in the language of abstract art

Shan Zuo and DaHuang Zhou began their artistic careers on the far side of the world. Known professionally as the Zhou Brothers (pronounced “joe”), they emigrated from China to Chicago two decades ago and have created an art center and foundation in their home neighborhood of Bridgeport. This year, they were named Laureates of the Lincoln Academy, which was established to recognize Illinois natives or residents who have brought honor to the state.

Born in Guangxi, a village in the poor southeastern region of China where the

family was exiled after their father spoke out against the Maoist regime, the brothers grew up in an intellectual family who supported their love of art and literature. They studied painting and drama at the University of Shanghai and the National Academy for Arts and Crafts in Beijing, where they each received a master of fine arts degree.

Emerging as professional artists after the Cultural Revolution, they were touted by the government as the new face of contemporary art, and their celebrity paralleled that of rock stars in the West. They were the first contemporary artists ever to show their work in an exhibition that traveled to the five largest museums in China. In 1985, they won the National Prize of the Chinese Avant-Garde of the

Ministry of Culture and the Prize for Creativity from the Peace Corps of the United Nations.

But they were wary of the political and cultural climate in China and wanted to test their artistic talents with a wider audience. “They had reached the pinnacle of their artistic career in China,” says Oskar Friedl, director of the Zhou B Art Center.

The opportunity to expand to the international stage came the next year in the form of an invitation to exhibit their work at the East-West Gallery in Chicago. But they were virtually unknown in America.

“We had two suitcases, some paintings and about \$30, and spoke very little English,” says DaHuang Zhou.



Brothers Shan Zuo and DaHuang Zhou always work together on paintings, sculptures and prints, often without ever communicating in words.



The Zhou Brothers, who are performance artists as well, sometimes create on stage before a live audience to produce large-scale paintings.

"It sounds cliché, but they've lived the American dream," says D. Neil Bremer, executive director of the Elmhurst Art Museum.

In fact, the path to their success in this country began with a disastrous 1989 fire that destroyed the East-West Gallery and six others in River North. The Kennedy family offered space in the Merchandise Mart for the galleries, and that led to increased opportunities, says Carole Jones, who was a co-owner of the East-West Gallery at the time.

"It was just a gift, to be in the Merchandise Mart, and it made a lot of difference to the Zhou brothers," she says.

The East-West Gallery sold more than 100 paintings, including *Dream of Chicago*, which is on display in the

lobby of the building at 55 E. Monroe in Chicago. Jones continues to help market and sell Zhou art through her gallery, Atelier International Art/Carole Jones. In 1991, the Zhous became American citizens.

In 2004, a retrospective exhibition titled *Zhou Brothers: 30 Years of Collaboration* showed simultaneously at the Elmhurst Art Museum and at the Chicago Cultural Center. A larger-scale retrospective will be on exhibit at the Beijing National Art Museum in their native China next August.

Bremer says the artists' work has a sense of connection, not only between the two of them, but also to their past.

"This idea of connectedness has a universality among all people," he says.

"because it began with this primitive, figurative kind of approach, where you can always find the image of a man, roughly drawn, within the larger image somewhere."

DaHuang says that recurring image traces back to a boat trip with their father when he and his brother were very young boys in China and they saw giant petroglyphs carved and painted in the cliffs. They began to incorporate the petroglyphs into their art, which grew more abstract over time.

At the time of the 2004 retrospective, art critic Michael Workman wrote for Newcity Communications that the brothers see their work "as a kind of syncretic sponge, absorbing world events and funneling them through a



Group Dance, 1994. Woodcut etching on rice paper



Dance with the Sun, 1989. Oil, mixed media on canvas

Right: Water Lily #3, 2001. Oil on silk



vocabulary of their own personal artistic myths. Their work's rooted in American abstraction, but as seen through a lens of naturally figurative calligraphic techniques. Moreover, their richly interwoven visual narratives illustrate the intense animal bonds of family as an expression of primarily international socio-political events experienced by them as individuals."

Also in 2004 they opened the Zhou B Art Center, an 87,000-square-foot building on the corner of 35th and Morgan, that houses 10 art galleries and art institutions, combining exhibition space and art training. They model instruction after the program at the International Summer Academy of Fine Arts in Salzburg, Austria, where they have taught classes each year since 1997. That city's art gallery will host an exhibition of their work next June.

The Zhou Brothers Art Foundation is a nonprofit established in 1991 that presents four exhibits a year featuring "artists who have won recognition for their social, political and conceptual impact on the field of contemporary art and society." The foundation also operates a foreign exchange program that awards artists a six-week residency in the United States.

With all their success — their work hangs in museums and private collections around the world and an individual piece can fetch up to a quarter million dollars — the brothers look at the year 2000 as a high point in their careers. They were invited to produce a performance piece for the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, where 250 world leaders of politics, business and academia gathered, including Bill Clinton, Tony Blair, Bill Gates, Akio Morita and many Nobel Prize winners. Workman reported that the brothers marked the event, where they painted a massive canvas nearly 10 feet by 26 feet called *New Beginnings*, the accomplishment of their goal to use art as an instrument for international unity.

"That connectedness is not only about their collaboration and their connection through time to the past, but there is a connectedness within their own craft and talent," says Bremer. "Whatever the Zhou's do, you can tell it is a Zhou piece." □

TROPICS TO PRAIRIE

Malaysian artist conveys a sense of place and belonging

The art of Siti Mariah Jackson mirrors a journey that began half a world away in a culture very different from that of her home in Champaign. She came to Illinois from Malaysia, where she was born in Kedah. She first created ceramics that reflected the lush plants and exotic animals of her native land. Living in central Illinois inspired her to create works featuring corn, prairies and turkeys. She has expanded her artistic expression to include watercolors. A series of 20 paintings called *Siti's Diary*, which chronicles her life experiences in America and visits to England, France and the Bahama Islands, is on display at the Asian American Cultural Center in Urbana through January 5.

"Many Asian Americans and other immigrant communities can relate to her experiences of coming to a new country, separated from her family and her home culture, wistful about the past while embracing and being happy about her current life," says David Chih, director of the center.

Originally a fabric artist like her mother, Jackson taught art in public schools and teachers' colleges for seven years before winning a Malaysian Federal Teaching Scholarship to pursue a master of arts degree at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. There she learned to love ceramics, pottery and sculpture, moving her artistic course in a new direction, working in an entirely different medium. She also found another love; she married artist Billy Morrow Jackson and with him established a home and a studio in Champaign.

The next evolution in her art led her to watercolors. In 1999, she says she became intrigued with that medium and began with simple, but technical, still-life studies.

"These studies led to a greater understanding of not only the watercolor medium but also the subject itself. It has also greatly benefited my designs and ceramic work, as well," she says.

Frequent visitors to Martha's Vineyard

in Massachusetts, the Jacksons were commissioned in 2003 to create an art book. Two years later, *On This Island: An Artistic View of Martha's Vineyard* was published by Spotlight Press. It includes more than 75 original paintings done between 1950 and 2004. The Verde Gallery in Champaign extended an exhibition of the Jacksons' paintings following the death of Billy Morrow Jackson in June.

Siti Jackson also was one of the artists in an exhibit titled *Into the Mystic 2006* at the Verde Gallery. There she exhibited another artistic outlet: photography. "I love photography as much as I love creating my ceramic work and watercolors," she says in an artist's statement. "I am interested in using a candle light or one light source, which can produce interesting and dramatic effects."

Each form of expression, but particularly her paintings, translates what Chih calls "biculturality." He says viewers of her work appreciate her use of color and images of Malaysia. "They can tell this is an Asian American with one foot in Southeast Asia and another foot here in the United States." □



Champaign artist Siti Mariah Jackson works in a variety of mediums, including sculpture, watercolor and photography.



The watercolor, *Maiden of the Pond*, is one of Siti Mariah Jackson's paintings from a series that will be exhibited at the Asian American Cultural Center in Urbana until January 5.

ISLAMIC REDEMPTION

Professor uses art to explore African-American Muslim life

Najjar Abdul-Musawwir's artistic journey could be described as more metaphorical than geographical. Through a reintroduction to artistic expression and a conversion to Islam, he changed the course of his life from state prisoner to state university professor.

He will exhibit several of his paintings in a show highlighting Midwestern African-American artists that will open in January at the Portfolio Gallery and Education Center in St. Louis. The gallery previously showed seven paintings from his *Fatiha* and *Door of Return* series.

"When I look at his art, I see beautiful

colors that could be on Turkish prayer rugs — inspiring, very vivid, exciting, passionate," says Robert Powell, founder and executive director of the nonprofit Portfolio gallery.

In Arabic, *Fatiha* means opening or door and is the name of the first chapter in the Quran.

"The *Fatiha* series is a visual discussion about Islamic art and the African-American experience," says Abdul-Musawwir. "I am an African American, born here, practicing Islam, producing artwork about that experience using abstraction, incorporating visual symbols — shapes, colors, materials — in order to have this discussion."

Family and friends recognized his talent early and encouraged him to "be an artist." A native Chicagoan,

he was partially raised by his grandparents in Tennessee. But opportunities were few in his elementary school and, as it turned out, fewer still in high school. He was among the first blacks in the area to be bused to a mostly white high school, a government program designed to help students like him. Instead, he says he found no encouragement to pursue his art. In fact, once he finally was granted entrance into an art class, the project he completed was stolen. Long after the failing grade had been recorded, the broken clay fish lamp was found stuffed behind a cabinet.

But as an athlete — he was a state champion gymnast his junior year — he hadn't had to worry about his grades. However, when he dropped off the team, he says he learned just how much he



Art by Najjar Abdul-Musawwir, a professor at Southern Illinois University Carbondale, will be on display in St. Louis in January.

didn't know, and being sent to the "dumb trailer" was humiliating.

He dropped out of school, got into trouble with the law and ended up in prison. There he met a man who introduced him to Islam, and he found a new peace and a new direction. He also benefited from another government program. Art professors from Southern Illinois University Carbondale taught classes at Menard Correctional Center, where Abdul-Musawwir's creativity was reawakened and nourished. When he was released, he began classes at SIUC's School of Art and Design.

"I spent that time, nearly a decade, reading and studying great literature, reading the dictionary front to back, building up my vocabulary."

He was a successful student, earning scholarships and awards as an undergraduate and graduate student. Upon finishing his master of fine arts degree, he proposed a class he designed on African-American history to SIUC. He began teaching in 1997 and will be up for tenure next year. Since 1989, he has created several series: *Free-Dom*, *Garment*, *Ghanian Stool*, *African Cubism Mask*, *Islamic Love Letters* and *What Lies Beneath: The Breast Cancer Series*.

"Najjar is a very physical and very immediate person and someone very concerned with communicating a positive, spiritual and inspirational message," says Joel Feldman, emeritus professor of art and Abdul-Musawwir's teacher and mentor at SIUC.

Indeed, Abdul-Musawwir shares his art beyond the classroom. He has developed and organized a youth art program in Carbondale and is active in supporting other artists.

"He helps artists to pursue their dreams," says Powell. "He's a positive factor. Along with his art, he shares his life. Just through his actions, he will be a lightning rod that we've been needing around the Midwest." □



Through his art and conversion to Islam, Najjar Abdul-Musawwir changed his life.

Alene Valkanas

She has spearheaded arts advocacy as executive director of the Illinois Arts Alliance, a Chicago-based nonprofit lobbying effort. Its sister organization, the Illinois Arts Alliance Foundation, provides research, programs and education related to the arts. Valkanas, who has led both for 20 out of the last 25 years, will retire next spring.

Under her leadership, the alliance initiated in 1991 The Advocacy Project to train members of grass-roots organizations to work with their state legislators and local officials. About six years ago, Valkanas says, she recognized that baby boomers would begin to retire, creating the need to transfer power to the next generation. She commissioned a statewide study of executive directors of nonprofit arts organizations. The effort, which she worked on with the Chicago Community Trust, turned into Arts Leadership for the 21st Century, a tool kit to help plan for succession.

Most recently, she and the Arts Alliance's public policy director Julie Adrianopoli again worked with the Chicago Community Trust to launch Illinois Creates, a statewide initiative to ensure that children receive comprehensive arts education. Valkanas warns of "cultural memory loss" because the level of arts instruction has diminished over time.

This is an edited version of her conversation with Statehouse Bureau Chief Bethany Carson.

Q. In 20 years how have attitudes changed about the importance of arts education?

I don't think it's a question of changing attitudes so much; it's just dealing with the particular constraints that schools have of time and of budget.

Also, in the last 20 years, there is now a really definitive body of research that very clearly makes the case that arts help children develop in many areas and



Alene Valkanas served as executive director of the Illinois Arts Alliance for 20 years.

perform better on tests and academically as a whole. They also learn to work better as a team, and they're being prepared for a new work economy, an information age economy, where one needs to be able to operate well with a group but also be creative and venturesome. That comes out of the kinds of creative experiences that are part of the arts.

Q. How did the research for Illinois Creates lay the foundation for improving equity in arts instruction between rural and urban school districts?

It did tell us the schools with the least amount of arts instruction are small and rural, where the most need for resources exists. So what we then proposed to the governor's office and later to the General Assembly is [that] there be funding made available through the state legislature and the State Board of Education to provide competitive grants for school districts to engage in community-based planning on how to introduce arts instruction into the schools or how to improve the quality and the level of instruction.

The State Board of Education then,

in partnership with the Illinois Arts Council, administered this first wave of grants. What we're very pleased to see is that in fiscal year '06, the General Assembly approved a \$2 million appropriation. And then, in [fiscal year] '07, \$4 million.

Q. What was the most convincing argument for doubling state funding to \$4 million for the Arts and Foreign Language grant program this fiscal year?

Access and equity is really at the core of our campaign. It's not fair that some Illinois students should have access to a quality arts education and others not. Our research is able to very clearly show where there are large areas of underserved young people. We really have a responsibility to these young people to provide them a quality education, and a quality education must include the arts.

In making a case to the state to increase the Arts and Foreign Language grant program, we wanted to show that there is broad-based support for arts education as a core curricular area. Parents, business leaders and the general public believe that the arts help prepare students to be the creative, innovative thinkers needed, given today's increasingly global economy.

Q. How did you find out about the importance of the arts?

I grew up in a small mill town outside of Pittsburgh and [had] no arts education in my small Catholic school. But my father, who was a cab driver, used his tips to pay for painting and piano lessons. And I was a frequent visitor to Andrew Carnegie's first of some 2,000 libraries he would build around the world. He built the first one in Braddock, the town I was born in. So I had this incredible resource, and again, it's public dollars sustaining that kind of resource. □

For updated news see the *Illinois Issues* Web site at <http://illinoisissues.uis.edu>

William Mahar Sr.

The decorated World War II veteran, two-term mayor of Homewood and former state lawmaker died October 13, two days before he was to be inducted into the Homewood Hall of Fame. He was 87.

"He just did big things in very quiet, unassuming ways," says his son Thomas Mahar. "He set down a pattern for me and my brother of how you live your life without ever saying a word."

His other son, former state Sen. William Mahar Jr., says despite juggling three careers among the U.S. Army, a full-service laundromat and the Illinois General Assembly, his father "still had time to coach my Little League team."

Mahar earned a degree in history and political science from the University of Wisconsin before opening the laundromat in the heart of Homewood, which is south of Chicago. His small business led to community involvement and 24 years of public service. A Republican, Mahar was elected as a Homewood village trustee in 1961 and as village president in 1965 and '69.

He was a highly visible mayor who invited constituents to his business to share their views, says current Mayor Rich Hofeld. Even when he moved on to serve in the legislature, Mahar's "heart was always at home."

Mahar served in the Illinois House from 1973 to '81, then in the state Senate until '85. He was vice chairman of the Legislative Council and a member of the National Guard Study Commission. Upon his retirement, his son took his place.

Terrence Hopkins

The former judge, in the 5th District Appellate Court of Illinois, died October 16. He was 58.

Hopkins ran an efficient courtroom and was courteous yet direct, says George Timberlake, retiring chief judge of the 2nd Judicial Circuit. Known as "Terry," he had a booming, yet gracious presence.

"He connected to people on an emotional level. He understood that in a courtroom situation, things that would be trivial in lay life assumed great meaning to people in their heightened emotional state. And he responded to that. He was able to express meaning and emotion and law and legal situations in a way that few can."

When not at work, he was frequently at play practice for community theater groups or singing in the choir at St. Mary Church in Mount Vernon. "He had a beautiful voice. He had a larger-than-life persona," says Mindy Koch, a friend of the Hopkins family.

His widow, Jerilee Hopkins, says he was an active volunteer. "As a family, we learned to just share him with everyone."

Hopkins was a private practitioner in his native West Frankfort before being elected as Franklin County state's attorney. Seven years later, he was elected 2nd Judicial Circuit judge and served 11 years before being elected to the 5th Judicial Appellate District in 1994. Hopkins, a Democrat, held a politically and geographically important seat as one of six elected judges serving the southern Illinois district.

Arts panel sets up award in Simon's name

Paul Simon, the late former U.S. senator and journalist, became the namesake of a new annual award that recognizes extraordinary contributions to the arts by public officials and members of the media. Simon sponsored the legislation that created the Illinois Arts Council, which celebrated its 40th anniversary last year.

He was posthumously awarded the inaugural Paul Simon Leadership in the Arts Award honor in October at the arts council's annual Governor's Awards for the Arts ceremony.

Sheila Simon, a member of the Illinois Arts Council, accepted the award on behalf of her late father for his work in public service, journalism and the arts.

HONORS

Mary Dempsey, Chicago library commissioner since 1994, was one of nine recognized as *Governing* magazine's Public Officials of the Year 2006. She recently straightened out the city's purchasing practices at Mayor Richard Daley's request.

In 2000, she received the Motorola Excellence in Public Service Award, co-sponsored by Motorola, the North Business & Industrial Council and *Illinois Issues*, for her work to bridge the so-called digital divide in Internet access.

Rachel Barton Pine, an internationally recognized violinist who is a Chicago native, **Karl Scroggin**, music director and classical music host of WUIS Public Radio in Springfield, and Illinois State Historian **Thomas Schwartz** received 2006 Studs Terkel Humanities Service awards, as did dozens of others who have made cultural contributions in their communities.

Illinois mayors name individuals from their cities and villages to receive the honor. Scroggin and Schwartz were nominated by Springfield Mayor Timothy Davlin. Barton Pine was nominated by Chicago Mayor Richard Daley.

In 2003, Scroggin launched the WUIS Young Musician's Concert Contest, a live competition for elementary and high school students who play classical instruments.

Schwartz, who served as interim director of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum, has been an instrumental force in bringing internationally known Lincoln scholars to Springfield.

At age 38, in 1993, he became the youngest person ever elected Illinois state historian.

Patrick Coburn, former publisher of the *State Journal-Register*, will chair the Destination Springfield civic group to attract more tourists to the Capitol city.

Coburn, appointed by Gov. Rod Blagojevich, has a task that mirrors a statewide effort to build on the cultural and economic development spurred by the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum in Springfield.

LETTERS



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Charles N. Wheeler III



The GOP proved a bigger loser than the hapless Cubs

by Charles N. Wheeler III

Making a campaign stop in Bloomington the Sunday before last month's general election, Republican Judy Baar Topinka suggested her Democratic opponent, Gov. Rod Blagojevich, should switch jobs and run for manager of the Chicago Cubs.

"They're a bunch of losers, too, and need some help," she explained.

Ouch. The gratuitous slap at Wrigley's Lovable Losers left even hard-core Cardinal fans in central Illinois scratching their heads.

"What was she thinking?" as the governor's spinmeisters would put it.

Voters are quite willing to ignore campaign mudslinging when it's directed at one's opponent — Blagojevich spent millions to blacken Topinka's reputation, a critical factor in his victory — but fans don't take kindly to a politician trash-talking their favorites.

The verbal gaffe seemed an appropriate finale for a campaign that never got untracked, reinforcing the Blagojevich campaign's depiction of Topinka as someone lacking the polish and finesse expected of a chief executive.

By the time the votes were counted a few days later, Topinka and her GOP colleagues proved bigger losers than the hapless Cubs, who finished the 2006 baseball campaign with the third-worst record in the majors.

Democrats swept the six constitutional offices by wide margins — marking the first time in 68 years the party can claim

The governor slipped a couple of percentage points in Chicago, but still swamped Topinka by almost 400,000 votes, 77 percent to 15 percent, with Whitney pulling the remainder.

all statewide offices. With 41 percent, the GOP treasurer hopeful, state Sen. Christine Radogno, was the only Republican to crack the 40 percent mark, in losing by almost 430,000 votes to political newcomer Alexi Giannoulas.

Green Party candidate Rich Whitney, a Carbondale civil rights attorney, posted a record showing for a third-party gubernatorial candidate, with more than 352,000 votes, almost 10.4 percent. In the campaign's closing days, Topinka's camp sought to portray Whitney as a spoiler who would siphon away votes she needed to oust the incumbent. But even had every Whitney voter marked for the Republican — a highly unlikely scenario — she still would have fallen more than 1,000 votes short of Blagojevich.

The governor's victory came amid ongoing federal investigations into his

administration's hiring and contracting practices, and in the wake of the indictment of one close adviser and the guilty plea of another major campaign donor on corruption charges. But a steady, six-month drumbeat of negative Blagojevich TV spots torpedoed whatever advantage the looming scandals might have given Topinka; many voters told pollsters neither could be trusted to clean up state government, but they liked the governor's health care and education policies.

Perhaps the biggest surprise in the contest, though, was Blagojevich's showing in Chicago's suburbs, long considered Republican turf. In improving his overall vote margin by more than 100,000 over 2002, the governor claimed the suburbs by some 61,000 votes, including pluralities in two traditionally GOP counties, Lake and Will. Indeed, Blagojevich pulled almost 9,000 votes more in the suburbs than he did four years ago, although almost 30,000 more suburbanites voted in 2002.

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Outside the metropolitan area, Topinka carried 67 of the 96 downstate counties, winning 48 percent of the vote. The treasurer fared best in central Illinois, taking 54 percent of the vote, for a margin of almost 120,000, including 68 percent in Sangamon County, home to Springfield, to

Blagojevich's 21 percent. But her down-state lead of almost 107,000 was far offset by Blagojevich's 460,000-vote cushion in the metropolitan area, giving the governor a 353,429-vote win.

Despite his solid victory, Blagojevich ran well behind the rest of the Democratic ticket. Giannoulis polled almost 1.7 million votes — roughly 100,000 more than Blagojevich — to beat Radogno, while three other Democratic incumbents — Attorney General Lisa Madigan, Secretary of State Jesse White and Comptroller Dan Hynes — all topped 2 million votes in posting easy wins.

The most impressive showing came from Madigan, who thumped her GOP rival, Tazewell County State's Attorney Stewart Umholtz, with almost 2.5 million votes to 820,000, more than a 3-to-1 margin. Madigan lost only two counties — Umholtz's home base of Tazewell and tiny Edwards in southeastern Illinois — by a total of less than 2,500 votes. She even pulled 65 percent of the vote in DuPage County, an almost unheard-of showing for

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a Democrat. White and Hynes also carried the GOP stronghold, possibly the best showing there ever for a Democratic ticket.

Moreover, Democrats bolstered their already-solid majorities in the Illinois General Assembly, including gaining an unprecedented 37 seats in the Senate, to the Republicans' 22. Senate President Emil Jones, a Chicago Democrat, added five seats, all in districts without an elected GOP incumbent in the race. Four of the

Democratic Senate gains — and the single House pickup, for a 66-52 majority — came in suburban areas, including several in which ongoing demographic changes, especially growing Hispanic numbers, are likely to enhance Democratic strength in the future.

One possible bright spot for Republicans might have been the party's success in holding a couple of suburban congressional seats under strong Democratic challenge. But even that small victory was tempered by a national anti-GOP wave that carried Democrats to majorities in both the U.S. Senate and the U. S. House, spelling the end of Rep. J. Dennis Hastert's eight-year tenure as speaker.

The ultimate irony, though, may have been that Topinka herself couldn't beat the Cubbies' anemic .407 winning percentage — she finished with just 39.6 percent of the vote. □

Charles N. Wheeler III is director of the Public Affairs Reporting program at the University of Illinois at Springfield.

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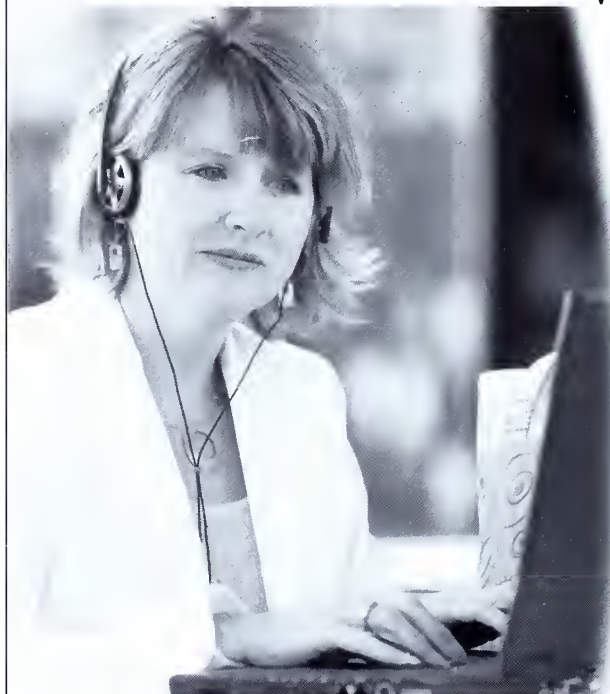
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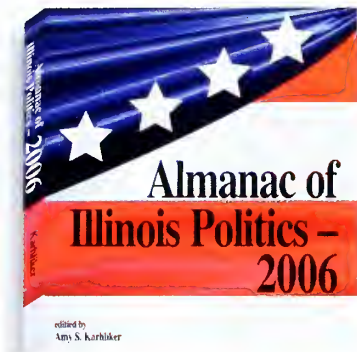
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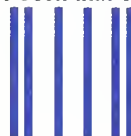
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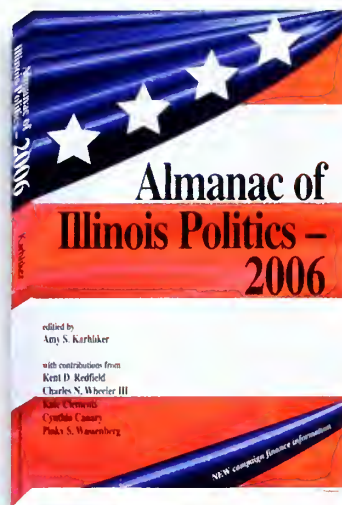
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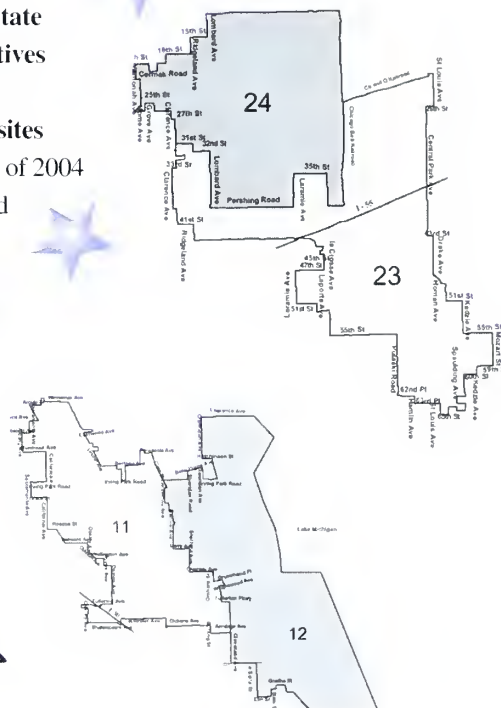
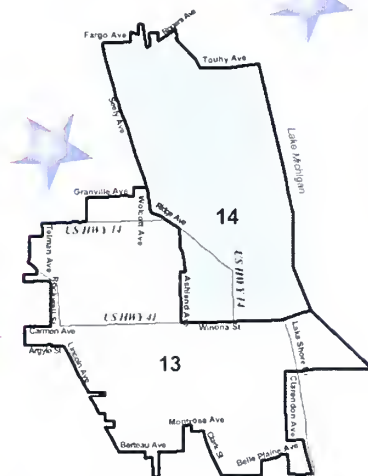
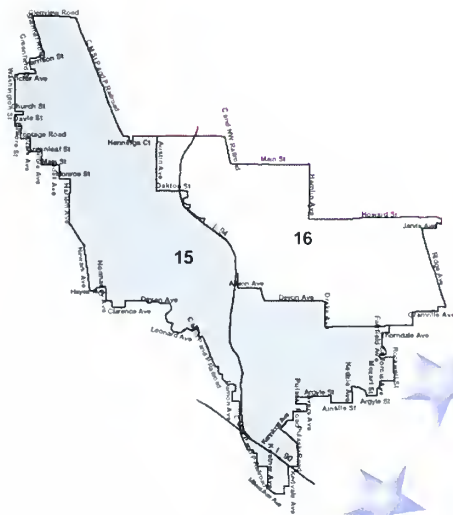
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